BACKGROUNDER 5-6136 SEPTEMBER 12, 1978
GUERRINI/UNITED NATIONS

NORTH SOUTH DIALOGUE STALLED

INTRO: THE COMMITTEE SET UP BY THE UNITED NATIONS TO CARRY ON THE ECONOMIC NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN INDUSTRIAL AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES--THE SO CALLED-NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE--HAS CUT SHORT ITS SESSION IN NEW YORK, CONFRONTED WITH A DEADLOCK OVER ITS FUNCTIONS AND AIMS. VOA'S JOHN GUERRINI EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPENED.

TEXT: THE COMMITTEE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. IT WAS SET UP BYTHE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LAST YEAR TO TAKE OVER FROM THE NORTH-SOUTH TALKS, WHICH ENDED INCONCLUSIVELY IN PARIS. IT'SA COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE--ALL ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-NINE U-N MEMBERS ARE ON IT--AND IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BRING THE ECONOMIC DIALOGUE BACK FROM THE RESTRICTED PARIS FORUM TO THE UNITED NATIONS.

BUT FROM THE START, THE DELEGATES COULD NOT AGREE ON THE NATURE OF THE COMMITTEE'S ASSIGNMENT. THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES, BY AND LARGE, SAW THE COMMITTEE AS A PLACE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS IN PREPARATION FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN NINETEEN EIGHTY. THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WANTED TO CARRY OUT SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE, IDRISS JAZAIRY, TRIED TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE WHEN THE COMMITTEE RE-CONVENED EARLY LAST WEEK, LIMITING ITS SCOPE AND POWERS. BUT HE SAID CONSENSUS WAS BLOCKED BY THE OBJECTIONS OF ONE MEMBER. MISTER JAZAIRY DID NOT NAME THAT MEMBER--BUT EVERYONE KNEW HE WAS TALKING ABOUT THE UNITED STATES.

THE UNITED STATES STILL BELIEVES THE COMMITTEE SHOULD NOT NEGOTIATE AGREEMENTS ON FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES AND SHOULD NOT TRESPASS INTO THE TERRITORY BEING HANDLED BY OTHER BODIES,

WHERE EXPERTS ARE DEALING WITH TECHNICAL ISSUES.

THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS FOR THE COMMITTEE TO SUSPEND ITS WORK AND GO BACK TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR A CLARIFICATION OF ITS MANDATE.

THE U-S DELEGATE EXPRESSED "PROFOUND DISAPPOINTMENT" THAT THE COMMITTEE HAD REACHED AN IMPASSE.

JAMAICA'S FOREIGN MINISTER P.J. PATTERSON, SPEAKING FOR THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, SAID THE COMMITTEE IS FACED WITH "A SERIOUS POLITICAL CRISIS." HE CHARGED THE UNITED STATES WITH INTRANSIGENCE.

STILL, U-S OFFICIALS FEEL THE SESSION DID NOT CLOSE ON A NOTE OF BITTERNESS AND CONFRONTATION--BUT ONLY OF DISAPPOINTMENT. AND THEY POINT OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED TO A CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

SECRETARY-GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM SAYS HE'S VERY MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT THE DEADLOCK IN THE COMMITTEE AND HE'S OFFERED TO DO ALL HE CAN TO HELP RESOLVE IT.

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